

EMPOWERING DALIT ENTREPRENEURS: AN ASSESSMENT OF GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES AND SUPPORT PROGRAMS IN INDIA.

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ABSTRACT

When it comes to the socioeconomic growth of a nation, entrepreneurship is one of the most important factors that contributes to the creation of employment possibilities, the utilization of local resources, and the mobilization of financial resources. It is necessary to provide financial assistance to business owners in order to prevent them from experiencing a lack of finances, which would then lead to their being ill and ultimately closing their doors. Entrepreneurs who are members of the Dalit community are still confined to their traditional occupations, which are occupations that require physical labor and are essentially low-level wage jobs. Those individuals who do consider going into self-employed businesses do not do so because they are afraid of the social pressure they will face and the possibility of losing sub-caste networks that serve as sources of mutual insurance policies. Secondly, in order to get around the challenges they face when attempting to form networks that span multiple social groups, Dalit business owners typically seek to develop their internal relationships and then leverage these bonds for economic goals. Specifically, this article focuses on the role that SIDBI plays in the promotion of dalit entrepreneurs in India.

Keywords: Empowering, Dalit Entrepreneurs, Government Initiatives

INTRODUCTION

One of the most important aspects of the socioeconomic development of a nation is the entrepreneurial spirit, which is responsible for the creation of employment possibilities, the utilization of local resources, and the mobilization of financial resources. Because of this, there is a requirement for institutional support in order to encourage entrepreneurial endeavors. The support required by the institutions can be obtained through two distinct channels: the first is through commercial banks, and the second is through other financial institutions. It is necessary to provide financial assistance to business owners in order to prevent them from experiencing a lack of finances, which would then lead to their being ill and ultimately closing their doors. Given this perspective, it is necessary to have an understanding of the role that institutions play in providing aid to entrepreneurs, and this knowledge becomes a crucial study for the purpose of fostering and developing entrepreneurialism within the nation.

The Dalits make up approximately 25 percent of the total population in India. The Directive Principles of State Policy place an emphasis on the role that the state plays in the provision of social justice, distributive justice, and natural justice to Dalits and other marginalized groups within society. Additionally, it is the responsibility of the state to allocate appropriate money within the framework of different plan periods in order to carry out a variety of welfare and development programs that are geared toward the empowerment of Dalits. Certain

corrective actions have been taken by the governments of India ever since the country gained its independence, with the goal of improving the socio-economic standing of Dalits in the country. Without the laws, regulations, and programs that have been implemented by the state, even the least amount of progress that has been made in the overall situation would not have been conceivable. These welfare measures, on the other hand, are considerably insufficient and need to be implemented in a more efficient manner in order to provide the Dalits with the ability to triumph over the ongoing subordination, marginalization, and exploitation that they face in India. On the basis of qualitative research methods, this study provides an elaboration on the empowerment of Dalits in India.

Through the propagation of a movement that was directed against the negative aspects of the caste system, Dr. Ambedkar committed his entire life to the cause of exterminating caste social stratification. It was through his counsel that his people had been able to liberate themselves from the myriad of oppressions that they faced. It was in Buddhist values, which encourage equality, self-respect, and education, that Buddha discovered the means by which Dalits could be liberated. The Dalits were treated with compassion and respect by Buddha, according to Ambedkar, and the Buddha never attempted to oppress them in the same way that Hinduism does. The post-independence era saw the formulation and implementation of a number of policies and programs with the purpose of facilitating the empowerment of Dalits, who had historically and structurally remained marginalized sectors of Indian society. The decision-makers, administrators, and other affected parties in India are made aware of the progress that has been made about the Dalit community. In compliance with the stipulations of the constitution, a number of welfare initiatives have been implemented since the First Five Year Plan for the purpose of fostering the educational, social, and economic development of Dalits..

Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes have been subjected to widespread exploitation as a result of the great economic backwardness, social retardation, and virtual stagnation that have had a cumulative effect on the situation for a considerable amount of time. In order to make development in a society that is dominated by castes, having the appropriate social and economic position is extremely important. It is because of this that the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes do not have a significant voice in the political and cultural activities that take place. At each and every step of Indian civilization, caste is an extremely significant factor. Additionally, caste is taken into consideration at each and every stage of human life, and the caste system is the focal point of practically all activities. Prior to the implementation of the Fourth Five Year Plan, the 'Backward Classes Sector' was responsible for the implementation of special programs for Dalits. Special Component Plan and Special Central Assistance is the name given to the new approach that was chosen for the purpose of integrating the development of Dalits. It was during the Fifth and Sixth Five Year Plans that the Scheduled Caste Development Corporations were established (Chaurasia, 1990:03). It is worthy of praise that India's economy has made excellent progress in a variety of areas of national development over the course of the past six decades of planned development.

OBJECTIVE

1. To study empowering dalit entrepreneurs
2. To study government initiatives and support programs in India

Economic liberalization and dalit empowerment

Subsequent to the implementation of the reforms in 1991, the cozy quasi-monopolies that existed during the license-permit era were eradicated and replaced by intense market competition. They did not give Dalits and other underprivileged groups the attention they deserved, which resulted in adverse effects on social and

economic equity and justice. Additionally, enterprises that are owned by Dalits have emerged as significant suppliers of components to the leading vehicle manufacturers in India.

Although the ascent of Dalit businesspeople and millionaires has begun, they still have a long way to go in this age of globalization (Kumar, 2001:11). In spite of the fact that special plans and programs were established for Dalits in the years following the country's independence, they continue to fall behind other segments of society in terms of both economic and other aspects of life (Arles, 2001:01). In the Five Year Plans, the expenditures for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes have stayed at a level that was lower than five percent. What this demonstrates is that the people in power do not have the political will or the social commitment to make things right. The failure of the Indian government to thoroughly implement the radical steps specified by the Constitution, which are necessary to deliver economic freedom and educational equality to the Dalits, has been a fundamental shortcoming of the post-independence Indian government (Krishnan, 2006:10).

On the basis of social responsibility, it is necessary for the government and corporate entities to make it possible for Dalits to make progress in all aspects of their lives and to experience empowerment. When it comes to higher education, Dalits are extremely underrepresented both in terms of quantity and proportion in India and other countries. According to Jadhav (2009):07, the educational empowerment of Dalits has not been adequately supported by the contributions of government ministries and educational institutions. Obtaining an education is essential to the process of Dalit emancipation.

In order to accomplish the objective of mainstreaming Dalits in India, the State is largely responsible for expanding educational and developmental opportunities for Dalits. This is done in order to achieve the goal of mainstreaming Dalits. Several discriminatory tendencies have contributed to the fact that Dalits have not made sufficient progress in the areas of education and development at this time. Their socioeconomic standing is the primary factor that contributes to the country's economic and political backwardness (Fraser, 2010:05). In order to continue their pursuit of national social equality in India, development organizations need to continue their investigation of different degrees of incentives.

Since the 1990s, globalization has had a significant impact on the socio-economic situations of Dalits, particularly with regard to education, employment, access to land, poverty, and other social programs. The Indian state, on the other hand, is gradually stripping itself of its social duties as a result of the implementation of policies that promote liberalization, privatization, and globalization. Due to the fact that the vast majority of Dalits reside in rural regions, the implementation of land reforms needs to be given the greatest priority in order to improve the socio-economic situations of the vast majority of Dalits (Mandal, 2014:13). In light of the new circumstances, the role of the state becomes increasingly important for the empowerment of the Dalits.

Social and economic exclusion of dalits

Social exclusion is a practice that is carried out in India on the basis of the caste system. The oppression that Dalits face as a result of their caste prevents them from participating in mainstream growth. The Dalits have become dependent on the dominant forces as a result of the process of social marginalization on their part. Not only are Dalits excluded from society, but they are also excluded economically and politically. According to Kadun and Gadkar (2014):08, any and all efforts pertaining to development had to include Dalits as active participants. For the purpose of facilitating the empowerment of Dalits in India, the vision that Dr. Ambedkar had at the time should be transformed into reality.

During the period after the country's independence, a number of Centrally Sponsored Schemes have been implemented for the purpose of providing resources and assistance to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. There is a lack of participation from the people who are supposed to benefit from these programs, and the government does not play a proactive role in the empowerment of Dalits (Guru et al., 2015:06). As a result, the majority of these programs are not being delivered effectively in the country. When it comes to the

empowerment of Dalits in India, there is a pressing need for a paradigm shift away from planning after the fact and towards planning in advance.

It was Ambedkar who urged the Dalits to continue the democratic battle for their own empowerment without making any concessions to the dominant powers in India who believed in power politics (Sharma, 2015:20). In order for Dalits to triumph over untouchability and caste-related indignities and disparities in the society, they are necessary to adopt Buddhism as their religion of choice.

In order to maintain their dominance, the dominating powers choose to support Dalit leaders who live like slaves. Cynicism is being bred by the tokenism. In order to regain the support of Dalits for the upcoming general elections in 2019, the current government of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), which is led by Narendra Modi, has chosen Ramnath Kovind, a Dalit, to serve as President of India. According to Kazmi (2017):09, this particular form of Dalit representation has become a barrier to the empowerment of Dalits in India. In India, secularism, socialism, democracy, and human rights have all suffered as a result of the right-wing political forces that have ushered in a new era of political fundamentalism and economic subjugation.

It is not enough to say that the difficulties that Dalit women face are the result of their lack of education, economic standing, or poverty; rather, they are a direct consequence of the terrible exploitation and subjugation that they face at the hands of the upper classes. Due to the fact that they are unaware of the constitutional provisions, development plans, and other opportunities, Dalit women continue to be primarily disenfranchised, destitute, and socially ostracized (Bakshi, 2017:02). It is the responsibility of the government and civil society to establish conditions that are conducive to the empowerment of women and other economically disadvantaged members of society.

The history of modern India is replete with instances of the marginalization of Dalits, which is in direct opposition to the principles of self-respect and empowerment. According to Viduthalai et al. (2017):25, the marginalization of Dalits in India can be attributed to a number of different issues. It is necessary for Dalits to receive assistance from a variety of stakeholders, including the media, in order to achieve their goal of empowerment.

In India, Dalit women are subjected to a multitude of harms and injustices as a result of discriminatory practices that are based on both gender and caste classification. According to Choudhary (2018:04), the introduction of reservations for Dalits in panchayat three-tier systems in the state has had a substantial impact on the power dynamics that exist in contemporary society. There would be an improvement in the condition of Dalits in India if they were given opportunities for political leadership and economic development projects.

Industrialization is a key means of empowering Dalits and other underprivileged groups of society in India and is becoming increasingly important in light of the changes that have taken place. According to Saxena (2018:17), the participation of Dalits in the financial system is an urgent necessity since it would result in the creation of job producers rather than job seekers. Promotion of public-private participation for the purpose of empowering Dalits financially in India should be encouraged by both the state and the corporate sector.

On the basis of self-confidence, skill development, entrepreneurial growth, and new chances in the economy, a small minority of Dalit entrepreneurs has formed in this age of globalization. This minority has emerged as a result of globalization. There have also been certain institutions that have provided assistance to Dalit business owners by means of a variety of creative and constructive programs (Shankar, 2019:19). When it comes to the growth of Dalit entrepreneurship in India, government institutions, nationalized banks, rural cooperatives, and corporate entities should all play a role that is both active and constructive.

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) in India has opened up new opportunities for women, Dalits, tribals, and other marginalized groups in society to improve their economic

and social stability. According to Thapar-Bjorkert et al. (2019:23), social standards continue to be a significant factor in keeping Dalits in India from achieving their full potential. With the goal of improving the social and economic standing of Dalits in all aspects of life, it is necessary to provide them with chances for gainful employment.

The government of India has undermined the empowerment of Dalits by minimizing important programs such as post-matriculation scholarships, UGC fellowships, rehabilitation of bonded labor, self-employment of safai karamcharis, land records management services, and other beneficial programs. This has been accomplished by denying adequate funding for these programs. It is quite obvious that the central government is indifferent to Dalits, as evidenced by the budgetary amount for the year 2018-19 being allocated. The successful implementation of development programs for Dalits in the country has been negatively impacted as a result of this. It is necessary for intellectuals and activists of the Dalit community to demonstrate against this form of political discrimination and to call for sufficient funding to be allocated for the implementation of a variety of development programs that are geared toward the empowerment of them.

Policies and programmes for dalit empowerment

During the various plan eras, the data illustrates the amount of money that was allocated to various SC/ST populations in India. The findings make it abundantly clear that the Government of India has not been accountable or constructive in its role in the empowerment of Dalits in the period after the country's independence. The budgetary allocation for the communities who are classified as Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes is woefully inadequate. The statistics makes it abundantly evident that the marginalization of Dalits in India is a direct result of the indifference of the state as well as the lack of necessary political and financial assistance. It is also abundantly obvious that Dalits in the post-independence era have been subjected to a heinous violation of their human rights. It is accurate to say that Dalits are entitled to budgetary allocations that are proportional to their population in the country.

A sizeable portion of the Scheduled Castes population is employed in the informal or unorganized sector, which includes both rural and urban areas. The Scheduled Castes have a very high rate of households that are landless or very close to becoming landless, which has resulted in a very high degree of manual wage labor among them. The Scheduled Castes are more likely to suffer from poor income, low consumption, and high incidences of poverty as a result of the high incidence of wage labor that is connected with high unemployment and under-employment rates. Providing convincing data on the ongoing economic inequities linked with castes, this comparative overview of the economic situation of the Scheduled Castes and other groups is presented here. There is therefore no room for doubt that the historical impact of traditional caste-based restrictions on the ownership of property and employment of profession is still observable to a substantial level. This is the case since it is beyond any reasonable doubt. It is almost impossible to find any protection against economic discrimination for Scheduled Castes in the private organized or unorganized sectors, in contrast to the protection that they got in the government and public sectors. Therefore, it is essential to extend protection in the form of job reservations or other forms in the agricultural and industrial sectors of the urban environment (Thorat, 2000:24).

The 12th plan places a particular emphasis on the job and income development programs that are designed to benefit Scheduled Castes and are implemented all over the country. A number of organizations, such the National Scheduled Caste Finance and Development Corporation, the National Safai Karmacharis Finance and Development Corporation, and others, have been established with the purpose of fostering the economic growth of Scheduled Caste organizations. In order to empower the Scheduled Castes economically, it is necessary to implement a variety of initiatives, including skill development programs, entrepreneurial development programs, leadership development programs, and other programs. In addition, the plan paper emphasizes the importance of distributing surplus government land to agricultural laborers in South Carolina who do not have access to land in order to better their economic standing. Additionally, the government intends

to highlight and market the products that are created by South Carolina craftsmen and business owners by participating in a variety of fairs and shows. In addition, the public sector provided financial assistance to the social welfare programs as part of the strategy.

The amount of money allocated for the empowerment of Scheduled Castes is not proportional to the number of people who belong to these castes, the extent of their poverty, or their status as underprivileged. The developmental condition of Dalits in India has been negatively impacted as a result of the delay in the implementation of welfare measures. First and foremost, the commitment of the elected representatives of Dalits to their political mentors and bosses is the primary reason why they have failed to live up to the aspirations of their people. The representatives of Dalits are not found in sufficient numbers in the process of putting into action a variety of developmental programs that are intended to empower Dalits in the country. There is no adoption of stringent disciplinary measures in order to penalize the authorities who have made mistakes and are accountable for the failure to implement welfare programs and developmental initiatives. In order to guarantee the strict implementation of a variety of developmental projects across the nation, the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes does not possess the essential powers and privileges and therefore cannot fulfill its duties.

CONCLUSION

In spite of the fact that Dalits make up around 25 percent of India's overall population, they continue to be subjected to a wide range of challenges, including but not limited to: slavery, humiliation, poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, illness, starvation, prejudice, and exploitation. As far as wealth, social position, education, health, and overall living conditions are concerned, they continue to be at the bottom of the Indian society. There are numerous constitutional protections, reservation privileges, and welfare programs that are intended to alleviate the socio-economic situations of the Dalits; yet, despite these efforts, the Dalits continue to be excluded, marginalized, and oppressed in Indian society. As a result, the advancement of Dalits is an integral component of the ongoing pursuit of educational advancement, social justice, economic parity, and political empowerment in the new millennium.

Entrepreneurship is constantly concerned with the socio-economic development of the country, which includes the creation of employment possibilities, the generating of money, and the utilization of local resources. In order to achieve sustainable and inclusive growth, one of the emerging needs in India is the promotion of entrepreneurial endeavors. The government has responded to this effect by implementing a number of steps to encourage entrepreneurial endeavors through the implementation of a variety of schemes, programs, and aid programs. Through the establishment of both financial and non-financial institutions, we worked to foster an environment that encourages entrepreneurial behaviors. As a result, starting a business is becoming increasingly popular in India. One of the key developments that would move the Dalits to the position of economically empowered people is the advent of entrepreneurial endeavors among them. As a result of this, financial institutions offer a specialized help to Dalit business owners in the form of subsidies, concessions, and rebates. The State Industrial Development Bank of India (SIDBI) is a leading financial organization in India that offers financial support to individual entrepreneurs. Additional financial assistance is being provided by the SIDBI to business owners who are Dalit. Nevertheless, the question of whether or not it actually reaches the Dalit business owners is a million dollar question. Therefore, there ought to be monitoring of the schemes in order to guarantee that the subsidies are delivered to Dalit business owners in a timely manner.

A social environment is one in which prejudice occurs everywhere, but a political environment is one in which everyone is treated equally. Using the initiatives of the government, Dalits were able to find answers to a variety of issues. Therefore, entrepreneurship acts as a gateway to transform the socio-economic position of Dalits and plants the seeds of social capital in order to accomplish the goal of becoming independent and self-sufficient.

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